



May 2015 Monthly Veterans' Newsletter

This Veterans Newsletter is compiled and provided by the Seminole County Veteran's Services Office. Its intent is to keep Seminole County Veterans informed about their rights, benefits, and news of interest. It is non-political and, except where noted, all articles are excerpted from outside sources. Local events honoring/supporting Veterans will be included as made available. You are encouraged to provide feedback and recommendations, as this is your Newsletter. Together with my small Team, I hope you find it both valuable and interesting.

Ed Burford, Seminole County Veterans Services Officer

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1. **Seminole County Veterans Service Officer Honored**, *Ed Sends*; During the first week of May, every year, this office closes as Cathy and I participate in annual training and recertification as prescribed by Florida Statutes. The training is provided by the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs (FDVA) and culminates with a banquet. Traditionally FDVA recognizes one Veterans Service Officer in the state whom by his/her actions and deeds portrays the character, passion and dedication of what a Veterans Services Officer should embody. This year I was chosen to receive this honor in front of my peers and FDVA. The certificate reads "For exceptional service provided to Seminole County Veterans. Ed Burford has exhibited great compassion, initiative, and leadership, always in the forefront to improve conditions for Veterans in Seminole County. His noble actions and dedication consistently improves quality of life for Florida Veterans." Signed; Alene Tarter, Director, Benefits and Assistance Division, FDVA. I am both proud and humbled to receive this honor. To be recognized like this, one needs the support of all of those around them. Thank you FDVA for this honor and thank you Cathy for your continued support.
2. **Sanford Celebrates Memorial Day**, *Ed Sends*, The City of Sanford and Seminole County celebrates and remembers Memorial Day every year. This year will be no different and on May 25th. Hosted by the Seminole County Veterans Advisory Council (SCAVAC) and the City of Sanford, this year's parade will be one of the largest in memory with hundreds marching in the parade and thousands watching as it slowly moves down First Avenue. Some of the Participants include Navy Sea Cadets, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Tuskegee Airmen, elected officials, Veterans Service Organizations, beauty queens and even the Palm Tree Santa's Patriotic Drill Team. This parade will have something for everyone. At the conclusion of the parade, please stay for the Memorial Day Remembrance ceremony when we remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice for this great country.

3. **Seminole County Hero's Memorial Dedication**, *Ed Sends*, The Seminole County Hero's Memorial will be dedicated on May 25th, 2015 at 1400 hours (2:00 pm). The Hero's Memorial is located in front of the Seminole County Criminal Justice Center on 17/92 in Sanford. It is called Hero's Memorial because it will remember the first responders, fire and police that lost their lives in the performance of their duties and those who died in Combat. This ceremony is open to the public.
4. **Lake Nona VA Open House**, *Ed Sends*, News Release from the Orlando VA, The Orlando VA Medical Center at Lake Nona will have an open house on Saturday May 23, 2015 from 10 am to 2 pm. Bring your Family, Food, Tours, Games and Prizes. Please bring proof of Veteran or Active Duty status. The New Lake Nona Orlando VAMC is located at 13800 Veterans Way, Orlando, FL 32827. For more information email: vhaorlNewOVAMC@va.gov
5. **Ribbon Cutting and Dedication at the Lake Nona VA**, *Ed sends*, The Orlando VA Medical Center will dedicate its Lake Nona Campus on Tuesday, May 26, 2015 at 10 am. The public is invited. The New Lake Nona Orlando VAMC is located at 13800 Veterans Way, Orlando, FL 32827. Please note that while this is the dedication, the facility is not yet fully functional. For more information email: vhaorlNewOVAMC@va.gov.
6. **Orlando VA Recruitment**, News Release, May 13, 2015, From the Orlando VA Public Information, "ATTN: We have recently switched over to our permanent phone system from the temporary system that was in place. The Recruitment Center at Lake Nona phone number has been changed to 407-631-4011. Please help us pass this information along."
7. **The 2015 Florida Legislative Session ended last week**, *Ed sends*, week of April 27, The 2015 Florida Legislative Session ended last week without the pomp and circumstance of previous years, and the legislature is headed to a special session to deal with the state budget. As a result, a majority of bills this year did not make it through to the end. However, several veteran-related bills were passed by the House and Senate and will be placed before Governor Scott for signature. If signed, most will take effect July 1, 2015. Please note there were a number of other bills still being considered when the session ended. Among the highlights:

HB 27 & SB 1398 -- Authorizes word "Veteran" to be exhibited on driver license or identification card of veteran. Replaces the "V" for Veteran option currently available.

HB 35 & SB 7028 -- Out-of-State Fee Waivers for Veterans & Dependents: Revises last year's Congressman C.W. "Bill" Young Veteran Tuition Waiver to include spouses and children using sponsor's GI Bill benefits.

HB 51 & SB 132 -- Authorizes veterans to provide the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles alternative documentation for renewal or replacement of disabled parking permits.

HB 329 & SB 112 -- Authorizes the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles to issue Combat Action Ribbon, Air Force Combat Action Medal and Distinguished Flying Cross license plates. Adds Woman Veteran, World War II Veteran and Navy Submariner plates.

HB 0185 & SB 647 -- Provides an exemption from public records requirements for certain personal identifying information of current or former servicemembers of military special operations units and the spouses and children of such servicemembers.

HB 801 & SB 0876 -- Adds a memorial to the Capitol in remembrance of the 241 members of the U.S. Armed Forces who lost their lives on October 23, 1983, in Beirut, Lebanon.

For more information, please contact FDVA Legislative and Cabinet Affairs Director Colleen Krepstekies at KrepstekiesC@fdva.state.fl.us or FDVA Legislative Analyst Jessica Kraynak at KraynakJ2@fdva.state.fl.us.

8. **House Steps Closer to Overhauling Retirement**, Military.com, Week of April 27, 2015 , Congress has taken the first and perhaps historic step toward phasing out the 20-year-or-bust retirement system the U.S. military has used to shape and retain its career forces since the end of World War II. The replacement plan, as [endorsed by the House armed services' personnel subcommittee](#), is a blended system that would cut by 20 percent the value of future force annuities in return for an added tool to build nest eggs earlier — 401(k)-like Thrift Savings Plan with government matching of service member TSP contributions. [Read more.](#)
9. **4 Ways Americans Can Support Military Families** Military.com, April 29, 2015, Service members and military spouses sometimes complain that America is not grateful for their service. Other times, the military community questions the way Americans show their gratitude through things like sale gimmicks, advertising or a plethora of sappy homecoming videos on the news or otherwise. [Read more.](#)
10. **House Rejects Proposed Overhaul to Commissary and TRICARE** Military.com, April 22, 2015, A series of proposed [TRICARE](#) and commissary cuts have been rejected by House lawmakers, and will not be included in their version of the annual defense spending bill, lawmakers said April 22. [Read more.](#)

11. **House Committee Votes for New Retirement Plan**, Military.com, May 4, 2015, The House Armed Services Committee has voted to give future generations of service members something different from the all-or-nothing 20-year retirement system. [Read more.](#)
12. **Obama: More Study Needed Before Overhauling Troop Pay**, Benefits Military.com, May 01, 2015 | by Brendan McGarry , President Obama said he wants more time to review controversial proposals that would overhaul troop pay and benefits. His administration "fully supports" the underlying objectives of recommendations made in January by an independent military compensation commission, according to a letter he sent lawmakers Thursday. [Read more.](#)
13. **Tell Congress to Support Troops**, MOAA, May 15, 2015, Senate lawmakers completed their draft of the FY16 defense bill; unfortunately, several administration-proposed cuts to military compensation and benefits are included. [Read more.](#)
14. ***Is Congress Looking For FAST-TRACK Authority On Military Retirement?*** MOAA, May 15, 2015, *By Col. Mike Hayden, USAF (Ret) , After the House finished its work on the FY16 defense bill, you have to wonder why Congress is so intent on fast-tracking changes to the retirement system. By now, you've heard the proposal: take the current 20-year, cliff-vested retirement benefit and convert it to a blended retirement system. Troops serving a full career get government contributions to a 401k in exchange for a reduced retirement pension. Troops who stay less than 20 years will have a portable benefit when leaving the service. What's troubling about this is that the House and Senate Armed Services Committees are moving forward with these drastic changes without first getting input from the Pentagon.* [Read more.](#)
15. **VA Accountability Act Introduced**, Military.com, May 04, 2015 , U.S. Representative Jeff Miller, Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs, has introduced the VA Accountability Act. The bill would give the Department of Veterans Affairs secretary sweeping new authority to fire corrupt or incompetent employees for cause. [Read more.](#)
16. **VA to Debut One-Stop Benefit Website** Military.com, May 11, 2015, Veterans will soon be able to log in to just one Department of Veterans Affairs website to manage their benefits, apply for doctors' appointments, and determine their eligibility for programs. The website will go live around May 20, but will first be open to around 50 veterans to help beta test the new portal. [Read more.](#)

17. **Looming Crisis Threaten Vets Access to Care**, MOAA, May 15, 2015, At separate hearings this week, House and Senate lawmakers made no bones about their frustrations with VA officials' implementation of a new program to provide veterans' health care."There is no excuse for the plethora of problems the VA was having, and the transition [to the Veterans Choice Program] should have been much better, but it wasn't," said Chairman Johnny Isakson, (R-Ga.) of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee. [Read more.](#)
18. **VA Strained as More Women Access Benefits**, MOAA, May 1, 2015, Women servicemembers are leaving the military and seeking veterans' benefits at higher rates, and the VA is struggling to keep up. There are more than two million women veterans in the United States, making up 10 percent of the total 22 million veterans population. Their number is expected to nearly double by 2040, even though the overall population of veterans is projected to decline. [Read more.](#)
19. **Talking to a Veteran about getting help can be tough, but it doesn't have to be.** Email from Veterans Health, May 20, 2015, Veterans are strong and resilient, but they may be reluctant to reach out for help on their own. That's why *Coaching Into Care* exists. It's a free and confidential VA service that helps friends and family members of Veterans have a conversation about seeking care. *Coaching Into Care* is a telephone-based service for families and friends of Veterans who think that a Veteran in their life may need help. Staff is available to coach callers on how they can motivate the Veterans in their lives to seek services they need in order to live happier, healthier lives. *Coaching Into Care* will be hosting a free, interactive online event on **Thursday, May 28, 2015 at 1:00pm EDT** that will demonstrate how *Coaching Into Care* can help. [Click here to register.](#) [Read more.](#)
20. **TRICARE on Alcohol Abuse**, Military.com, Week of April 27, 2015 , The American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) offers several questions to ask yourself to determine if you have a drinking problem: [Read more.](#)
21. **TRICARE Scam Warning**, Military.com, May 11, 2015 , In March and April, TRICARE received growing numbers of reports from beneficiaries that they have been the target of unsolicited marketing efforts trying to collect personal information and send them unwanted prescriptions, which are then billed at great cost to the TRICARE. [Read more.](#)
22. **Congress Rejects Plans to Reform TRICARE**, Military.com, Week of May 18, 2015, Both the Senate and House armed services committees have rejected two TRICARE reform plans, one from the Obama administration to raise fees and consolidate the three option health benefit, and a second from the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission to replace TRICARE entirely with a menu of civilian health insurance options. [Read more.](#)

23. **Veterans' Real Stories of Strength and Resilience**, *VA Press Release*, April 27th, 2015 10:00 AM EDT, Hundreds of Veterans share their experiences with mental health challenges and reaching out for support. On a unique website, you can hear how they started their journeys toward recovery. [Read the full story](#)
24. **Initial Findings for Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry**, VA News Release, April 29, 2015, More than 19,000 Veterans and active duty Servicemembers have participated in VA's Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry through September 2014. Initial findings are available in a report. [Read more.](#)
25. **PTSD –Need help?** Witnessed trauma such as war? Anger, irritability and rage; feeling anxious; depression; difficulty trusting others; guilty feelings about acts you committed or witnessed or could not prevent; hyper-alertness and startled reactions; isolation from others; lost of interest; low tolerance to stress; problems with authority; don't feel good about yourself; nightmares; substance abuse; trouble sleeping? Don't want to travel into Orlando, the VetCenter is coming to Seminole County. To reach out for help call Veronica Csongradi, LMFT, CAP, Readjustment Counseling Therapist, (352) 536-6701 to set up an appointment. It takes a Warrior to ask for help!
26. **Legion launching tribute to Old Glory**, News Release, April 28, 2015, "Indivisible: The Story of Our Flag," will be a collectible American Legion Centennial bookazine. Through illustrations and text, it will tell the story of the U.S. flag from the American Revolution to the Global War on Terrorism. Voices, unique facts, historical anecdotes and more will team up with beautiful illustrations to tell that story. The American Legion wants the public to be a part of this tribute to our flag. Social media users are encouraged to post photos of Old Glory, or share what the U.S. flag means to them, on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram using the hashtag #MyUSFlag. Those who want to participate also can pin photos of the flag to the Legion's Pinterest page. (<https://www.pinterest.com/talhq/>). You can also visit www.legion.org.
27. **Military appreciation Month**, Military.com, April 29, 2015, Congress designated May as National Military Appreciation Month in 1999 to ensure the nation was given the opportunity to publically demonstrate their appreciation for the sacrifices and successes made by our servicemembers - past and present. Each year the president makes a proclamation, reminding Americans of the important role the U.S. Armed Forces have played in the history and development of our country. [Read more.](#)
28. **HASC Approves FY16 NDAA**, MOAA, May 1, 2015, HASC members rejected recommendations to consolidate TRICARE, establish new TRICARE for Life enrollment fees, and have working age retirees pay to use military treatment facilities. DoD's budget submission created the first ever means-tested co-pay system based on military rank. Legislators also opposed moves to further decrease housing allowances and commissary funding. The administration's request would slash \$322 million from commissary funding. [Read more.](#)

29. **100th Anniversary of Flanders Fields**, Military.com, May 04, 2015; April 22, 2015 marked the 100th anniversary of the beginning of chemical warfare at Flanders Fields in France during World War I. German forces first used chlorine gas on British, French, Canadian and Algerian forces on April 22, 1915, chemical weapons went on to claim tens of thousands of lives throughout the remainder of the war. [Read more.](#)
30. **DoD Survey Invitation on your Commissary Benefit**, May 15, 2015, *Ed Sends*, Following is an e-mail I received concerning commissary and PX/BX shopping “As an eligible patron to your local commissary and military exchange, we would greatly appreciate your participation in a 20-25 minute survey being conducted to better understand your grocery shopping habits. This work is part of a study commissioned by the National Defense Authorization Act for 2015 and is a critical component of maintaining and expanding the important benefits of the military resale system. Your input will ultimately be an important component to a study that will go to Congress later this year on the best direction to take the military resale system. In addition to your opinion, we would appreciate the input of any other members of your family that use Commissaries or military exchanges as your dependent, so please forward this email and link to any eligible family members as well. Please use the link below to access the survey website. <http://www8.intellisurvey.com/run/xuj040115?pan=99&b=13> If you choose to participate in this voluntary survey, your answers will be completely anonymous and analyzed in combination with other members' responses, so please give us your candid feedback. This survey will be open until June 1, 2015, and you will be able to respond any time day or night until the deadline. We greatly appreciate your time and input. Thank you in advance for your participation! For questions concerning survey authorization and DoD sponsorship, contact Mr. Justin Hall, GS-15, Assistant Director, MWR and Resale Policy Directorate at justin.w.hall10.civ@mail.mil.”
31. **Women Veterans Can Be Role Models for Health**, VA News Release, 05/11/2015 10:00 AM EDT, Of the almost 670,000 Women Veterans enrolled with VA, over 400,000 of them utilized VHA health care in 2014. Read here about how they can be role models for health for other women and young girls. [Read more.](#)
32. **Capturing Veteran Stories**, Military.com, May 21, 2015, by Veteran Legacies Project, Every day we lose 500 WWII veterans. In just a few short years most of these amazing heroes will have passed into history. This Memorial Day honor a veteran by sharing their story on the Veterans Legacies Database. Your participation will help to ensure that future generations will never forget these amazing veterans. [Read more.](#)
33. **House Passes 6 Bills Aimed at Helping Veterans**, Associated Press | May 19, 2015 | by Matthew Daly, WASHINGTON — The House approved a series of bills Monday aimed at helping veterans win government-paid jobs, get small business loans or obtain other assistance. The House passed six bills aimed at veterans. One bill would give preference

to government contractors who employ veterans on a full-time basis. Another bill would allow all veterans to receive official identification cards through the VA. [Read more.](#)

- 34. Report: Despite hiring efforts, veterans face employment obstacles and civilian disconnect** Washington, DC), Stars and Stripes, May 12, 2015, Despite recent national efforts to hire veterans and educate employers, a new report released Tuesday says that vets have trouble finding and keeping jobs and that civilian employers struggle to understand them. [Read more.](#)

- 35. Ed Sends! Is it time to make a career change, find a job, or see if you are eligible for an internship?** Check-out all the federal, state, and VA jobs in FLORIDA!

1,555 Jobs - Florida Federal Contract Jobs <http://www.indeed.com/q-Government-Contract-I-Florida-jobs.html>, 598 Jobs "People First" jobs in Florida <https://jobs.myflorida.com/joblist.html?dispmode=-1.-5&ERFormID=newjoblist&ERFormCode=2.020010643011867> Click on county to find jobs near you.

603 Jobs "Florida Federal Jobs - Florida Government Jobs"
<http://federalgovernmentjobs.us/job-location/florida-fl.html?email=&ps=100&Sort=LC&dr=a>

Click on location to find a city near you.

223 Jobs "VA Careers in Florida - Job Search & Apply"
<http://federalgovernmentjobs.us/job-location/florida-fl.html?email=&ps=100&Sort=LC&dr=a&P=5> Click on the position for additional information.

351 Jobs "USA JOBS in Florida"
<https://www.usajobs.gov/Search?Keyword=&Location=Florida&search=Search&AutoCompleteSelected=false>

These sites/employment events are for Service Members, Veterans, and/or Military Spouses.

Internships at the VA - VA offers multiple internship programs for current students, recent graduates, VA employees, Veterans, and outside applicants.

<http://mycareeratva.va.gov/library/55>

Veterans Administration - <http://www.va.gov/jobs/>

VA for Vets - jobs - <http://vaforvets.va.gov/>

My Career at VA - <http://mycareeratva.va.gov/>

Feds Hire Vets- <http://www.fedshirevets.gov/>

Join Us! Digital Service at VA - <http://www.va.gov/ds/>

- 36. The City of Lake Mary Currently Has Vacant Positions**, Veteran Preference is available. For more information, to look for positions available in Lake Mary or to apply for a position, please visit: <http://www.lakemaryfl.com/human-resources/webforms/job-listings>

37. Altamonte Springs invites Veterans to apply for Vacant Positions, Veteran Preference is available. For more information visit <http://www.altamonte.org/jobs.aspx>

38. Senate Dems call on VA to help student vets at Corinthian colleges, The Hill, 12 May, Lydia Wheeler, Washington DC, Senate Democrats are calling on the Department of Veteran Affairs to help student veterans navigate the collapse of Corinthian College. The for-profit school closed 28 campuses late last month, leaving 1,600 students in the lurch, and filed for bankruptcy on May 4. [Read more.](#)

Newsletter from your local Seminole County Veterans' Services Office Staff.

**For all the Veterans you know, shake their hand and thank them for their
service;
If you are a Veteran, we as individuals and a Country owe you a debt of gratitude.**

Thank you for your service to our Country!